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The Norfolk *Natterjack*



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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Articles with the camera symbol have associated photographs in the Nats' Gallery (centre pages)

22 AUG 2006

Toad-in-the-hole....

Plenty of sunny weather recently to tempt all good naturalists and photographers outdoors, so I'll expect a bumper crop of observations for the next issue. In this edition we have a mix of observations and information that will help wet the appetite, for instance on page 11 there is a note on forthcoming courses run at the UEA School of Continuing Education, which will be of interest if you want to know more about fungi. Would you believe we have had the Collared Dove with us for over 50 years - you can read one of the first accounts of the species as reported in '*The Norfolk Bird Report 1956*'. Another relative newcomer - the ruddy duck- is also featured in this edition as are the increasing numbers of Mediterranean gulls at Yarmouth.

FF

MEDITERRANEAN GULLS

by Hans Watson



For several years now I have followed with interest the changing fortunes of the wintering Mediterranean gulls of Yarmouth, especially along the sea front. This interest began when, bored with shopping with my wife and her friend, I took myself off to the sea front to see how many Med gulls were present.

When my visits started I considered myself fortunate to see five Meds amongst the black-headed and common gulls, whereas now in the winter months it is not uncommon to see 40 or more in view, resting on the beach. They are in fact often the most common gull to be seen in the vicinity of The Jetty and old Wellington Pier.

Winter gives an ideal opportunity to compare and differentiate between the plumage's of Mediterranean, black-headed and common gulls at their various ages, and at Yarmouth beach, with good numbers of all three gulls the opportunity could not be better.

Many birdwatchers know the main distinguishing features of these three gulls in their adult plumages, but are less confident of birds that have not reached adult plumage. They then tend to rely on calls, size comparison, bill shape, all of which are fine in good conditions, but in less than good conditions only a knowledge of first-winter and second-winter plumages enables positive identification.



At Yarmouth all three species are so used to being fed by people, that they come close enough for examination of all plumage phases, and it is possible to appreciate the difference between the first-winter plumage of the three gulls. It also helps emphasize the point that whereas Meds and common gulls have a second-winter plumage, black-headed gulls do not, as they assume adult plumage when they reach their second winter.

A bonus in March of this year at Yarmouth, was the chance to appreciate the sight of at least 10 Mediterranean gulls in their superb adult plumage. In addition a number of colour ringed birds nowadays appear, as a result of ringing projects in Belgium, Holland, France and several other countries.

Ruddy ducks

by Tony Howes



On a recent visit to Cley a pair of ruddy ducks were giving a courtship display just in front of the Bishop hide. These birds have become much more common in recent years. American by origin, some apparently escaped from Slimbridge back in 1952-53, where they had been brought in 1948.

The male was 'bubbling' and throwing his chest out, at one point they both came very close, enabling a few photographs to be taken as they swam past. The male is very colourful, brick-red on back and sides, large white cheek patch, and most striking of all, a bright blue bill, a very handsome fellow indeed. When swimming, the tail is trailed behind like a black fan, a nice bird but there are doubts about its desirability in the U.K.

Not the right bird!

by Cherry Farrow

On 5th July, while tending my vegetable patch, my attention was drawn to a 'tap tap' sound, although similar to the familiar sound of a song thrush knocking the shell of a snail on its 'anvil' it was more rapid and less forceful. I cautiously moved to have a look. To my surprise the bird knocking the snail was not a thrush but a female blackbird. This behaviour is apparently new as according to the books blackbirds are known to steal snails from thrushes after the hard work is done or to eat small snails by crushing them in their beaks but thrush-like 'bashing' is not recorded. The snail in question was the brown-lipped snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*).



Small gardeners and conservation

by Bob Blanford



The smaller that ones garden is, plus the need to grow ones own vegetables, probably makes it less easy to practice wildlife conservation in that garden than in a situation where a definite conservation area can be established. My wife and I cannot possibly have a clear cut conservation area but we do our best to have a regard for wildlife and in doing so we are rewarded with immense pleasure. For this piece, I just wish to cite three instances in our garden that involved moths and butterflies, each of which received a different approach .

Mullein Moths.

I was delighted when I noticed a solitary uncultivated Aaron's rod in our border. My wife and I have a great liking for the wild mulleins and we leave them be in our garden on the odd occasions that we see one there. However, I was not delighted to see the mullein moth caterpillars on our lovely Aaron's rod. But after some discussion, my wife and I decided to give conservation preference to the mullein moth caterpillars.

Cabbage White Butterflies

At the same period of time that the mullein moths were eating our Aaron's rod, hordes of cabbage whites were visiting our cabbages . We live a long way from the nearest greengrocer plus we favour organically grown produce so we have to grow our own vegetables. There was no discernment required here. My pest control mode kicked in immediately. We were not prepared to lose our cabbages.

Privet Hawk Moths

At the latter end of that summer, my wife Allyson showed me two privet hawk moth caterpillars that were eating the growing points of her recently planted holly sapling. Transfer was the solution we decided upon. Where to? The holly sapling had been planted right next to the privet bush. This then gave me an opportunity to put the two caterpillars into a small vivarium to pupate so that I could get a photograph of the emerging moths. Only one pupation was successful. When the privet hawk moth from the successful pupa emerged, its wings were slightly crinkled and I thought that this was normal until it then seemed that the unfurling time was becoming very much longer than expected. I wondered if the problem was due to something in the nature of the moth's



enclosure. So at dusk, I placed the moth on a flowering shrub in our back garden. I popped outside early next morning to see if it had flown and was surprised to see that it had paired with another moth which did not leave until about midday. My moth's wings still looked crinkled and as it had started to rain, I put it back in the small vivarium. I left it there for a couple of days and it laid eggs. I put her back outside and she flew off. The tiny caterpillars did not survive for more than two days. It had not been my intention to rear privet hawk moths. If it had, I would have used a larger vivarium and even then the chances of success might have been slim. I did get my picture, though.

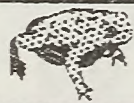
Pembrokeshire Coast

by Tony Howes

The coastal area of the Pembrokeshire national park has much in the way of stunning scenery and wild life. This year, unlike our last visit two years ago, Wendy and I found the cliffs awash with delightful spring flowers. The recent steady rain has, I am sure, helped in providing all this abundant colour. Spring quill, thrift, cowslip, birds foot trefoil, lousewort, and many others were massed along this fabulous stretch of coastal cliffs. The gorse bushes too were laden with solid bloom, - to wander through this colourful, rocky kingdom under the warm sun of a spring May morning was sheer delight.

The bird life too is pretty spectacular, breeding species we don't see in Norfolk, like chough, raven, and peregrine are to be found there. I spent some time watching the ravens, these, the largest of the crow family, are incredible, they announce their presence with deep sonorous 'Pruc' calls. Every now and again they (a family of six, two adults with youngsters), would drift over my vantage point just to check out what was going on, they also performed the most amazing aerobatics. Choughs too gave much delight, again putting on spectacular flying displays. They spread their wingtips in the manner of raptors when in flight, and with their blood red bills and legs are unmistakable.

We had been told by our cottage owner that that the badgers had not been seen much so far this year, but I put out cat biscuits and peanuts any way, and we stayed up watching, hoping that some thing would show up in the garden. We had to wait a long time the first night, but at 11.50 pm the first badger came ambling up the path, it soon found the goodies, it was just like meeting an old friend. I think the reason they are so late in coming to the garden is the amount of worms and other natural food available to them due to the wet weather this year, but whatever the reason, nice to see him, and he can have my biscuits any time.



Badger Behaviour

by John Crouch

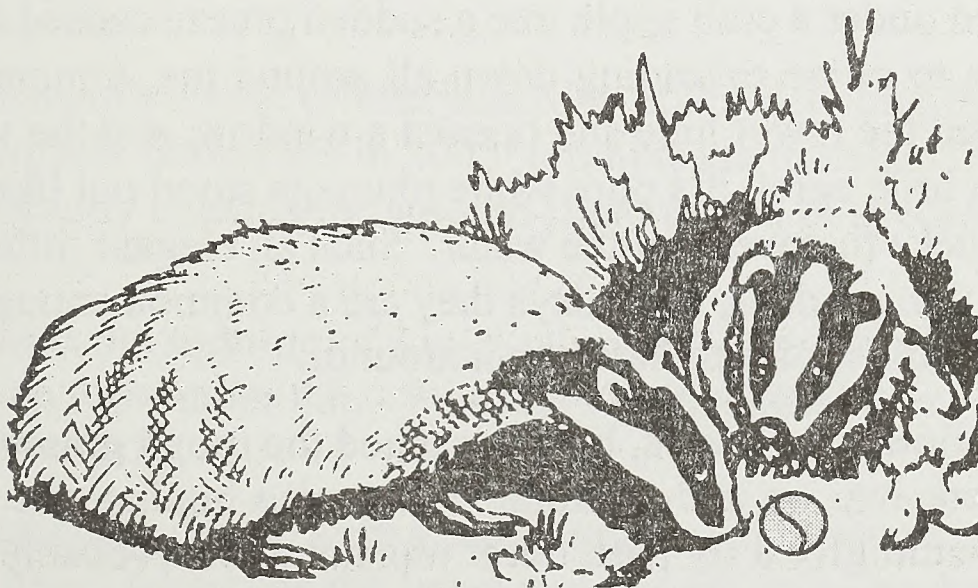
Late one evening as I approached a target sett, an awful sound of snarling could be heard from within the sett area. It was a wonderful clear moonlit evening so image intensifying equipment was not required.

On entering the sett area it was noted that there was an old boar was sitting near a sett entrance, he was being 'attacked' by two young boars (his sons) which were born late December last year. The young boars appeared to be attacking the stomach of the older badger, they were either side of him and as he turned to fend off one the other lunged in from the other side. Even though the old badger was lashing out with his paws and front claws, there did not appear to be any serious aggressive intent.

Upon moving closer to the fracas the three badgers looked up at me, the old boar took advantage of the lull and bent down, picking something up from under his stomach. He came bounding over to me and dropped something at my feet:- a tennis ball!

Suddenly, one of the young badgers charged over to me, picked up the ball and disappeared underground with it, hotly pursued by his brother. They emerged a few minutes later and spent the next twenty minutes chasing and fighting each other over this ball. It is assumed that the old boar had found this ball, and was determined not to let his sons take it away from him.

I have been studying badgers since 1955 and have never recorded this type of behaviour before. Badgers never cease to amaze me, we never stop learning about wildlife!



Strumpshaw Fen

by Tony Howes

May is a beautiful time of year to be out in the countryside, everything is fresh and shining with pristine vigour, there are so many shades of green, no two the same. Wild flowers are lighting up the hedgerows, and wildlife is bursting at the seams in the woods and fields all around.

I took a walk round Strumpshaw fen one afternoon mid month, the air was balmy with the scent of hawthorn blossom as I entered the reserve. Numerous swallows and martins were hawking over the open water for insects, and much higher could be seen the black sickle shapes of swifts etched against the vault of blue sky.

A kingfisher was seen as it flew up one of the channels, looking like an azure dart, the shrill, high pitched whistle drew my attention to it as it sped away. At the fen hide two hobbies were putting on an air display of unparalleled skill and elegance, their mastery of flight is awe inspiring, so fast and precise, I never tire of watching these superb little falcons. There were marsh harriers in flight over the fen, also experts at using the air currents and showing their flying skills, but compared to the falcons they seem cumbersome and slow. However it would be wrong to compare the two, each has evolved to fill a certain niche in nature's rich tapestry.

Walking the path alongside the river I stopped a while to watch a pair of great crested grebes, they had built a nest of floating vegetation in one of the small bays, it was anchored to a few reed stems, the whole thing would rise and fall in the swell each time a cruiser passed. It looked very unstable indeed, I can only wish them the very best of luck.

Further on as I passed under a crab apple tree a sudden breeze caused a shower of snow white petals to come cascading down all around me, a moment of magic I felt. I climbed the tower hide and opened a window, and the very first bird to be seen was a little egret, it's pure white plumage stood out like a beacon among the various ducks that were on the water. Such an elegant little heron, very dainty in every thing it does, nowadays they are a common enough sight along the Norfolk coastline, nice to have them around.

I walked back to the flower meadows, here I scanned the rough grassy parts for water deer, there were two up and feeding. I was also hoping one of the resident barn owls would give a fly past, but it was not to be, probably a little too early as the sun was still up. There were a few 'mossies' about as I went



back through the trees towards reception, I suppose they are good for some thing. They always bring me out in bumps when I get bitten, I hurried along through there as quickly as possible. A last look out over the water as I reached the reception hide, might just be an otter about, but no luck there, just one hobby perched on a dead tree.

I had enjoyed the last few hours, a lovely walk in ideal conditions, the line comes to mind 'O, to be in England now that spring is here' very apt I think.

Pill Woodlice

by Ken & Gillian Beckett

In April last year we were surprised at the sight of about 40 woodlice crossing a short stretch of road near Fring in West Norfolk. This year on the 25th April, we saw the same phenomenon on a road about 10 miles away near Thornham, counting 140 of the creatures in about 600m and plainly there were many more as well as many squashed ones. They were the woodlouse common to chalky areas, *Armadillidium vulgare*, but reading through 'Woodlice' by S.L.Sutton, published in 1972, there is no mention of any mass movement of this sort. The majority of them were crossing in the same direction, but we saw a few coming back, though these may have been disorientated by passing cars of which there were several. Has anyone else had the same experience, or know why they were moving by day in this fashion?

A late Speckled Wood in 2005.

by Stuart Paston

Patrick Bonham's article (Natterjack May 2006) detailing the earliest and latest dates of Norfolk butterflies in 2005 prompts me to belatedly submit a record that significantly extends the autumn flight period of speckled wood in Norfolk last year.

This concerns the sighting of a well-worn individual in the old part of Norwich Cemetery on November 8th, - by some way the latest date I have recorded this species.

The autumn flight period varies according to which source you consult but most web sites give October as the latest month with mid-October favoured. So a November sighting, even in a good autumn as last year, is unusual.



White Admiral

by Francis Farrow

The white admiral is one of my favourite butterflies from the way it tends to glide in an undulating manner through woodland glades, very reminiscent of some tropical butterflies. The white admiral is described in '*The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland*' as one that has expanded its range northward and eastward throughout the 20th century. In Norfolk this expansion has also been observed and locally in North Norfolk the butterfly has spread along the Cromer-Holt ridge in recent years from Holt Lowes to Bodham Woods to Sheringham Park to Pretty Corner, Sheringham. On July 5th 2006 a white admiral was spotted on Beeston Common, basking in the evening sunshine at the top of an ash tree. This is as far as I know a first sighting of this beautiful butterfly for the Common. On 11th July a second sighting of one taking nectar at bramble was recorded. As there is plenty of honeysuckle for the larvae in the area it is hoped enough butterflies will appear for breeding to take place and enable a local population to be established for future years.

Looking at Poppies



Grace Corne Publ: *Flora Facts and Fables* (2006)

ISBN 0-9533314-3-1. 42pp. £4.50 + p&p

There are so many ways of enjoying wild plants: making lists; sitting in a meadow; separating microspecies. Whatever turns you on. Grace Corne combines at least two, a botanical precision (always expressed in simple language) and folklore. Many will be familiar with Grace's engaging and informative columns in the Eastern Daily Press and others will have subscribed to her *Flora, Facts and Fables* magazine. This has run its course but the name persists as the imprint for what will hopefully be a series of small books in which members of a group of plants are first described and then treated to her distinctive blend of historical titbits and folklore.

Appropriately for Norfolk, poppies are first for this treatment, with all British species, wild and naturalised, covered. Modestly, Grace omits her name from the cover but her avowed aim of bringing plants to a wide audience, will be achieved by publications of this kind. The A5 pages are sprinkled with over fifty line drawings of plants and their parts by Robert Maidstone, pleasing both for their elegance and practicality. In four pages of well-reproduced colour photographs, Don Berwick illustrates all the widespread poppy species.

Tony Leech



NATS' GALLERY - August 2006

THE NORFOLK SHOW.

The Society mounted another successful exhibition in 2006, master-minded by David Nobbs.

Robert Maidstone (below centre, bearded) as usual provided popular animate attractions

Photo: David Nobbs.



YELLOW HORNED-POPPY

Glaucium flavum
at Blakeney Point.

See review of
Grace Corne's
Looking at Poppies.
Photo: Simon Harrap.





ADDERS Holt Lowes 2006. Norfolk has many sites for this beautiful snake, but perhaps none better than Holt Lowes, where Bernard Dawson's maximum day count of 115 adults constitutes one of the highest in Britain. Photo: *Bernard Hastings*.



PRIVET HAWKMOTHS *Sphinx ligustri* female above, male below. See article on 'Small Gardeners and Conservation'. Photo: *Bob Blandford*.

THE WASP *Dolichovespula media* only appeared in the mid-1980s but has now colonised most of England. Its nest is typically suspended in a bush (here a currant at Scratby), making this relatively docile wasp a hazard for the unobservant gardener! Photo: *Diane Mussell*.





MEDITERRANEAN GULL

Once a rarity, 40 or more are now regularly present at Great Yarmouth, and in March this year up to ten could be admired in their smart summer plumage (see article).

Photo: *Hans Watson.*



RUDDY DUCK

This attractive but controversial duck was photographed at Cley (see article). Photo: *Tony Howes.*



OTTER SPRAINTS: A GALLERY

Clockwise from top:

1. Remains of White-clawed Crayfish associated with a small deposit of spraints containing crayfish remains.

2. Pile of spraints with fish scales and bone fragments. The greyish-black coloration indicates that these are older spraints than shown in photos 3 and 5.



3. Fresh anal jelly partially covering black, bolus spraints. 4. Brownish, bolus spraints with crayfish remains. 5. Typical fresh, black, bolus spraints. Photos 1, 3 & 5 Buckenham Tofts, 2 Thompson Water, 4 Bodney; Janet & Ian Keymer.

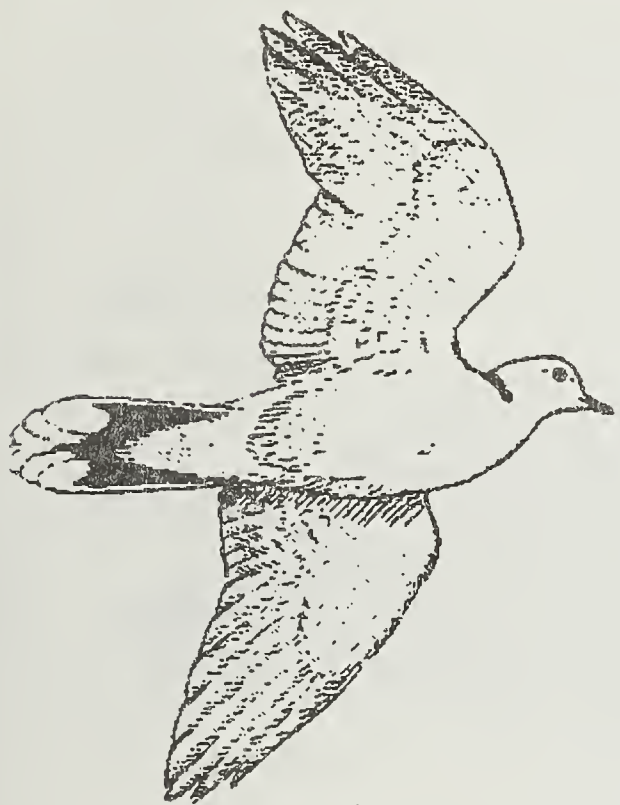


COLLARED DOVES IN NORFOLK

R. A. RICHARDSON, M. J. SEAGO, A. C. CHURCH

On 3rd July, 1956, M.J.S. was attracted by the unfamiliar tri-syllabic cooing of two doves, one of which was seen, in the trees of a walled

garden near the sea in North Norfolk. Later, on consulting published descriptions and an illustration of the collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), he found they tallied very favourably with his field notes.



In the weeks that followed either R.A.R. or A.C.C. were able to visit the site for varying periods almost daily and their observations, necessarily restricted owing to the very public nature of the site. Meanwhile, reports of similar birds were received from a locality a mile and a half away on the

outskirts of a small coastal town, all of which proved to be *decaocto* and not the domesticated Barbary dove (*S. risoria*) nor any hybrid.

Intensive enquiries within the county and an appeal for information in the regional press have so far failed to produce evidence of "escapes" or liberated birds and there seems no reason to suppose that these Norfolk specimens are anything but genuine wild colonists from the Continent.

It is now known that birds were present at two of the sites in 1955, and that young were reared at one of them. By the end of the 1956 breeding season at least sixteen birds, adults and young, were known to have been in the area, at least seven wintering.



Photographic Group

Our first meeting in October will offer the opportunity to share with all the members our summer activities. I hope you will all participate during the evening to show your work, and be prepared to explain how and where you took them. It is important not to feel shy about showing your efforts because everyone will benefit. We are all at different stages in our hobby, so therefore it will not be an issue who is better than the next person. Remember the only thing that really matters is that you are enjoying, and doing what you want to achieve. I am looking forward to a really awarding evening.

The November meeting sees a brilliant insect photographer who will certainly encourage you to have a go at quite a difficult subject. He is still very much into slide film, but he was telling me he is going to try digital this year so I hope we shall see some of his work.

I have been given the green light to have an extra meet on January 22nd. I am prepared to arrange an evening, but if anyone has a suggestion for what they would like to have then please let me know as soon as you read this article.

February meeting is meant to provide some tuition, and also for yourselves to participate by asking questions about ways of manipulation, etc.

The last meeting in March will be another opportunity to bring your own work for discussion, and Kevin Simmonds who will revisit us again to demonstrate his approach to his way of techniques. He will also show what photographic gear he uses.

I look forward to seeing you all in October.

Brian Macfarlane

Programme

Monday October 23rd 2006 - *'Show your own'*
Monday November 27th - *'Nature in miniature'*
Monday 22nd January 2007 - TBA
Monday February 26th - *'All things digital'*
Monday 26th March - *'Digital achievements'*



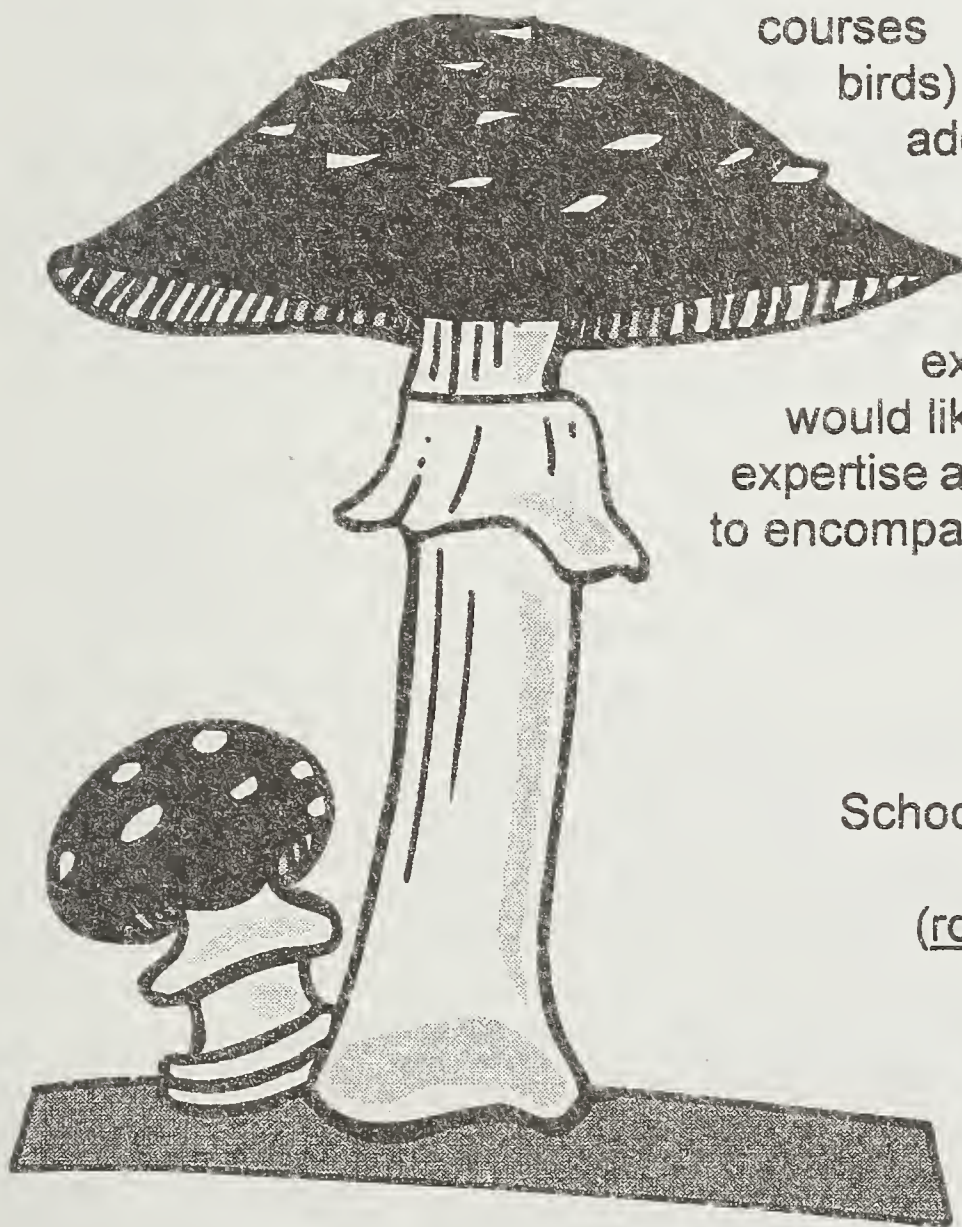
New Courses for Naturalists at UEA

The University of East Anglia is currently developing a range of new natural history courses aimed at providing a catalyst for people with an interest in wildlife and conservation to develop their abilities to recognise species in the field. Entitled 'Field ID Skills...' these courses are designed to be suitable for beginners but will also allow the more experienced to increase their knowledge and skills-base. Centring on a particular taxonomic group, each programme, running over the duration of a university term, will enable students to get to grips with animals and plants through lab-based evening sessions and field visits. Each course will cost £110 (approx 20 hours teaching time). Courses are open to everyone and no previous experience of higher education is necessary.

The first course in the 2006/7 academic year entitled 'Field ID Skills: Fungi' will be led by NNNS's own Tony Leech. If you would like more information on this, or other forthcoming courses (on insects, plants and birds), please contact me at the address below.

I would also welcome correspondence from experienced naturalists who would like to share their taxonomic expertise as the programme develops to encompass more specialist groups.

Rob Coleman,
School of Continuing Education,
University of East Anglia
(robert.coleman@uea.ac.uk)





Bath Hills & Bungay Common.

Sunday 7th May 2006.

Twelve members including two Lowestoft Field Club and six Great Yarmouth Naturalists Society, met in the car park on Outney Common Bungay to record the flora of tetrad TM3290 and 3092. On the grazing marsh on the Suffolk side of the river we found a rather rich ditch which included common water crowfoot, *Ranunculus aquatilis*, fools watercress, *Apium nodiflorum*, celery leaved buttercup, *R. sceleratus* and cuckoo flower, *Cardamine pratensis* which was growing by the bank. As we crossed the bridge over the Waveney into Norfolk we paused to see the flowers of ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* which are normally so high in the canopy that they are overlooked. Here were many spring favourites like moschatel, *Adoxa moschatellina*, lesser celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria* and by the river marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*. The meadow was very good and produced meadow foxtail, *Alopecurus pratensis* plus several meadow saxifrage, *Saxifraga granulata*. Once up onto the hills proper the most dominant species was spring beauty, *Claytonia perfoliata* followed further on by dog's mercury, *Mercurialis perennis*. Along the hedgebank we found the remnants of winter aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis* and several spurge laurel, *Daphne laureola*. On the path we found early dog violet, *Viola reichenbachiana* and non flowering plants of sweet violet, *Viola odorata*. We all thought we had escaped the pernicious alexanders, *Smyrnium olustratum* but we did only come across one plant. Stinking iris, *Iris foetidissima* had naturalized here as had stinking hellebore, *Helleborus foetidus*. This also hosted the very rare leaf mine of the fly *Phytomyza hellebore*, however, the stinking hellebore has decreased rapidly. In the Dell we adjourned for lunch and found some very interesting plants indeed. Ramsons, *Allium ursinum* was present along with a fine balm of Gilead, *Populus x jackii*, creeping comfrey, *Symphytum grandiflorum*, *S. orientale* and coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara* covered the path down to the marsh. After our break we continued on towards the lake and recorded some rather large crab apple, *Malus sylvestris*. Other trees of note were some fine hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*, bird cherry, *Prunus padus* and wild cherry, *P. Avium*. We also found some nice bright common field speedwell, *Veronica persica* and germander speedwell, *V. Chamaedrys*. After leaving the tetrad informal recording began and we found three species of *Geranium* along a very productive grass verge.



In flower were cut-leaved cranesbill, *Geranium dissectum*, dove's-foot cranesbill, *G. Molle*, round leaved cranesbill, *G. Rotundifolium* and meadow cranesbill *G. pratense* was in leaf only. Also along here and into Earsham Village we found bur chervil, *Anthriscus caucalis* and rough chervil, *Chaerophyllum temulum*. Once in Earsham Village we found an unkempt front garden covered in grape hyacinth, *Muscari neglectum* and along nearby paths both caper spurge, *Euphorbia lathyris* and petty spurge, *E. pepulus* were seen. As we walked along the old road to Bungay we found a single lucerne, *Medicago sativa*. In the town itself we saw ivy leaved toadflax, *Cybalaria muralis* and yellow corydalis, *Corydalis lutea*. Otherwise of note were a troop of mushrooms, The miller, *Clitoplius prunulus*, ear fungus, *Auricularia judae*, cramp balls, *Daldinea concentrica* and blushing bracket, *Daedaleopsis confragosa*. Of the butterflies we saw were several small tortoiseshells, a small white, four holly blues, a brimstone and two peacocks. A grass snake and a common toad were seen along with several seven spot ladybirds, *Coccinella 7 punctata*, one two spot ladybird, *Adalia bipunctata*, several common green shield bugs, *Palomena prasina*, a single pied shield bug, *Sehirus bicolor* and an Ichneumon fly species. Of the mammals we recorded rabbit, a large fresh dead brown rat and a muntjac deer was seen grazing on winter wheat. Finally A cuckoo was heard by all of the group and was the first of the year for us all.

It was good to see that there are some active members within the Norfolk Naturalists and Great Yarmouth Naturalists who are willing to attend meetings in north Suffolk. I hope there are many reading this who wished they had attended. I sincerely hope so. 107 Taxa were recorded and the group walked ten miles.

Colin A Jacobs

WILD PLANTS REVEALED, no. 14

A VISIT TO HORNINGTOFT WOOD AND FARM,

Sunday 21st May 2006

In spite of very threatening weather, over 20 people arrived at Manor Farm, Horningtoft for the 14th Wild Plants Revealed meeting. We were welcomed by the owner, Mr Colin Palmer, who not only gave us free rein to explore the farm, but also came around with us and produced trestle tables in his barn during a wet lunch time, not to mention a plate of delicious, sausage rolls fresh from the oven!

All the areas we explored were in 1797 still part of the Great Wood which is now reduced to no more than a tenth of its former size, so we saw many woodland plants. We started by walking along a track with high hedges which gave us 15 species of trees and shrubs to study including a small-leaved lime, *Tilia cordata*, and an enormous oak spreading far along the hedgerow and doubtless part of



including zig-zag Clover, *Trifolium medium* and on ground adjacent, greater woodrush, *Luzula sylvatica*. We then worked our way along a second track, with many quite different plants, reaching the large grass field which contains two historical sites. By now it was raining and we paused to shelter in the lee of an excellent high hedge, just right for donning suitable rain wear. As we did so, our leader realised that only the day before during a similar squall she had sheltered behind this same hedge, but on the other side! Such is the fickleness of this year's spring. When we reached the large pasture, we made for the single bank which runs across the field and marks the course of a Roman Road. Although less than a metre above the surface of the rest of the field, it provides a much drier footing and we were able to find colonies of unexpected plants for a moist clay area such as sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, heath bedstraw, *Galium saxatile* and spring sedge, *Carex caryophylla*. The grassland around was rather well grazed by a flock of ewes with lambs, but we were still able to find leaves of wood anemone, *Anemone nemorosa*, several sedges and earthnut, *Conopodium majus*, but only a very few leaves and flowers of our native bluebell, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* which have been quite frequent in past years. Are they palatable to sheep or is it just their trampling? The other area of earthworks has, in the distant past, been quarried for the underlying glacial sands and gravels and the steeper banks were plainly beloved by the sheep so we walked back along a wide conservation headland to lunch, noting some arable weeds as we went, notably two fine plants for comparison of cut-leaved and soft cranesbill, *Geranium dissectum* and *G. molle*. Back at the farm most took refuge in the barn where the rain began to ease.

In the afternoon it had been the intention to go as a group to the Great Wood, but a visit from the local hunt a few days earlier had left the damp clay track a veritable quagmire pitted with deep hoof holes and it was no longer even a possible walk, let alone a pleasant one. As a result we split into three smaller groups, one group making for Little Wood on the opposite side of the road where they found several trees of sour cherry, *Prunus cerasus* on the wood edge and a good colony of wood melic grass, *Melica uniflora* amongst other things inside. The second and third groups took a side each of the Great Wood and crossed the wood banks away from the track as soon as possible, moving into the wood proper away from the mud as soon as possible. We then walked amongst the coppice stems and both parties soon found early purple orchids, *Orchis mascula*, herb paris, *Paris quadrifolia*, wood goldilocks, *Ranunculus auricomus*, woodruff, *Galium odoratum* and yellow pimpernel, *Lysimachia nemorum* amongst others. We also spent time comparing the dissection of various fern fronds to get to grips with their identification, looked at- and smelled – a colony of ramsons, *Allium ursinum* and admired the buds of several plants of greater butterfly orchid, *Platanthera chlorantha*. Many other woodland specialties were present as well as more familiar plants which could be compared with them. The third group also came on to this area later in the afternoon so that everyone could see the specialties and we all finally converged on the farm at around 4.00.p.m. There we were able to give our thanks, shed our wellies and macs and disperse.

Gillian Beckett.





The Royal Norfolk Show this year was held in perfect weather and for the two days record crowds came. Both days were very busy and this year's theme of 'Wildlife of house and home' proved of great interest.



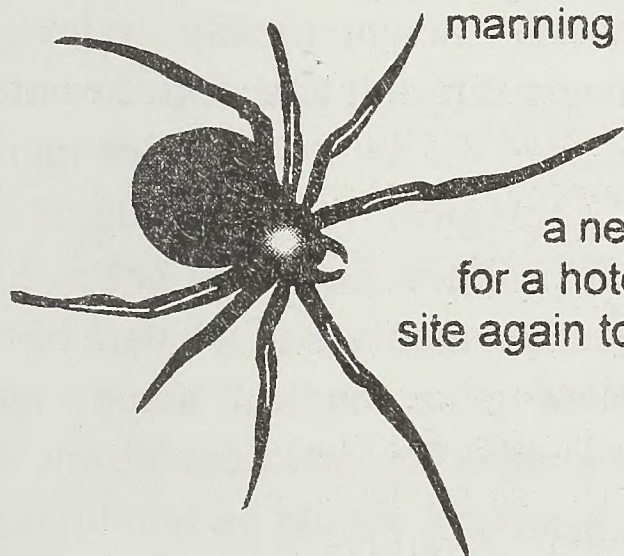
Robert Maidstone brought along house crickets and various pests, which are found in the home. Peter Nicholson showed house spiders, always of interest to young and old. Exhibits by Ken Durrant included a collection of various insects to be found in the home, while Derek Howlett displayed a range of various garden snails and Tony Irwin's beetles also provided added interest. Thanks to them all for a great display. A hornet's nest from Wheatfen cottage and a display of accompanying photographs of the hornets (David Nobbs) proved a very good educational tool for these much-misunderstood insects.

Brian Mcfarlane, once again showed a superb display of his digital photography to promote the Society's photographic group.



The Society's publications were also on display and were sold, at times gaining new members in the process.

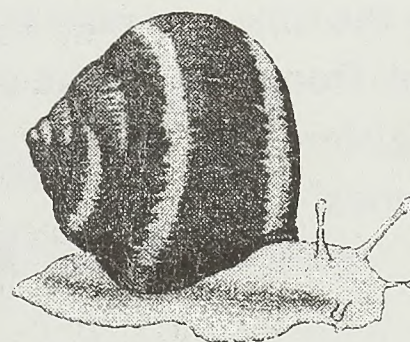
In all a very successful show, thanks also to Janet Negal, Stephen Livermore, Brian Macfarlane, David Griffin and Tony Leech in manning the stand over the two days.



Next year our regular spot in the conservation area will be moved, along with other stands to a new part of the showground. This is to make way for a hotel and conference centre. We hope for a good site again to promote the Society in 2007:

David Nobbs.

(A big thankyou to David also for all the hard work and effort he has again put into organising and producing another fine exhibit)



International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN)

As a member of the London based Zoological Club of the Zoological Society of London, I have recently been sent a copy of a document outlining the methods to be used when describing a new species of the Animal Kingdom. Not many of us have the excitement of discovering, describing and naming a new species. However, you never know your luck! Many years ago I discovered a new species of bird louse (sub order Mallophaga), but hasten to add I was not sufficiently well qualified in entomology to describe it properly, so I sent it to a Mallophagologist (if there is such a person') at the Natural History Museum in London. If you are still interested, please read on.

The document I was sent states there is "a proposal that the International Commission on Zoological nomenclature (ICZN) should establish ZooBank, an open access, mandatory registration system for descriptions of all new taxa and nomenclatural acts in animal taxonomy" (published in the journal "Nature", September, 2005). The paper in "Nature" is an "argument for the establishment of a registration system, proposed by 29 currently active zoologists from a variety of backgrounds. The widely dispersed nature of taxonomic publications that effect the scientific names of animals is an obstacle to progress in zoology. For example in entomology alone, there are more than 1100 specialist journals that might contain taxonomically relevant information", many species of which are extremely difficult to access. In order to catalogue our disappearing biodiversity the need for an authoritative name registry is greater than ever before. The "Zoological Record" published annually by the Zoological Society of London (London Zoo) will act as the primary data collector with ICZN as the independent archiver of the data base. "ZooBank will function as an archived index of zoological names and nomenclatural acts. A statement regarding the availability or unavailability of names will be provided. A beta version of the ZooBank should be functioning by the time you read this communication (see www.zoobank.org) or follow the link from the website at www.iczn.org. "This will allow published names to be registered and enable users to search through the 1.5 million registered animal names"

Ian F. Keymer



RESEARCH

Round-up

Please remember if you have any results for the recent surveys to send them to the appropriate recorder:

See 'Natterjack' No. 92

Dragonflies - Dr. Pam Taylor

Corn bunting, turtle dove and tree sparrow - Giles Dunmore

Catfield Fen / Little Ouse headwaters - Alec Bull

See 'Natterjack' No. 93

Early marsh orchid - Simon Harrap

Alexanders/harebell - Gillian Beckett (West Norfolk) / Bob Ellis (East Norfolk)

The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*'
will be November 2006.

Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by
October 1st 2006
to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8QD

Email: francis.f@virgin.net

Please send all photographic material to:

Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield, Melton Constable,
Norfolk, NR22 2RP

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